

**Statement of
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before the
Subcommittee on the Postal Service
Committee on Government Reform and Oversight
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Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee. I appreciate this opportunity to discuss with the Subcommittee the integral role played by the Postal Inspection Service within the United States Postal Service. Ken Weaver, the Chief Postal Inspector, accompanies me this afternoon.

The Inspection Service is indeed an integral part of the Postal Service. Like the Postal Service itself, the Inspection Service can trace its roots directly to our first Postmaster General, Benjamin Franklin, who determined a need for an internal function to safeguard the integrity and security of the mail and postal revenue. Franklin's vision was codified by William T. Barry, who was appointed by President Andrew Jackson and became the first Postmaster General to sit as a member of the President's Cabinet.

In 1830, PMG Barry established an Office of Instructions and Mail Depredations as the investigative and inspection branch of the Post Office Department. The head of that office, P. S. Loughborough, is considered the first Chief Postal Inspector. Consequently, the Inspection Service predates such fundamental postal pillars as free city delivery, street letter boxes, and even postage stamps.

Today, a professional force of approximately 2000 Postal Inspectors, augmented by 1,500 uniformed Postal Police Officers and 900 professional and technical support personnel, uphold over 200 federal criminal and civil statutes that effect the integrity of the U.S. Mail and the postal system. Postal customers, postal employees, and the American taxpayer are the direct beneficiaries of these efforts.

The growth and development of the nation's mail system is inextricably interwoven with that of the Postal Inspection Service. As such, it is extremely

difficult to envision a Postal Service that does not include the fundamental Inspector function as it has existed in one form or another since colonial times.

It is also not readily apparent that dramatic change in the Inspection Service is needed now. The Inspection Service is uniformly recognized, both domestically and internationally, as a model practitioner among law enforcement agencies. This is not because it is federal in nature but because it is effective in action. Its high reputation is founded on a record of professionalism, integrity, and results. Few agencies, of any size, can compare to the Inspection Service in terms of investigative efficiency as measured by successful court action. More than 90 percent of Inspection Service cases brought to trial are concluded in convictions.

The reputation and respect Inspectors have earned over the years has caused them to be used in all types of sensitive investigations on behalf of the U. S. Government. The Department of Justice requested the services of Postal Inspectors to lead the investigations into the incidents at Ruby Ridge, Waco and in the Martin Luther King assassination. The independence of the Inspection Service, as not being a part of either the Justice or Treasury Departments, has proven to be a valuable asset.

We believe that this success is, in sizeable part, a direct result of the historic integration of Inspection Service operations into the fabric of the Postal Service. Inspectors live and breathe the mail. They understand the workings of the mail system and the interplay of its parts as no other security and law enforcement agency could. They are working partners with postmasters, clerks, carriers, and all postal employees in ensuring the safety, security, and integrity of the mail, the people who move the mail, and the organization that supports both.

It is also probably true that Postal Inspectors are the most 'local' of all federal law enforcement officers. This is a natural by-product of their integration into the mission of the Postal Service. Every post office, every mail collection box, every employee, indeed, every home and business mail receptacle is made more safe and secure under their watchful eye. This intense local focus combined with their expertise in matters of the mail and operations contributes to the significant partnerships that exists between the Inspection Service and state

and local law enforcement agencies. It is also of great utility in the many joint projects conducted by the Inspection Service with their counterparts in other federal agencies, the military, and even with foreign posts and investigative bodies.

Mr. Chairman, in your invitation to today's discussion, you indicated that the increasingly commercial operations of the Postal Service might raise competition policy questions about the role of the Postal Inspection Service. If I may paraphrase that issue, we might ask, "Does the Inspection Service provide an unfair competitive advantage for the Postal Service?" I think the record shows that the answer is no.

As I have noted, the Inspection Service and its antecedents have been protecting the mail for centuries. During that time, the Postal Service has had numerous products that have faced competition. In 1913, for example, we began parcel post service, and in 1970 we introduced a pioneering new service called Express Mail. Subsequently, both of these markets have grown considerably; however, the Postal Service's market shares have not kept pace with the competition. The presence of the Inspection Service has not deterred private sector competitors from literally monopolizing these markets.

On the other hand, in recent years, it has become clear that the Postal Service has shown new competitive strength across all of its markets. This success properly belongs to the nearly 800,000 career postal employees, including Postal Inspectors, who have raised customer service and satisfaction to record levels and who have contributed to the financial success of the Postal Service that has allowed us to lower the real cost of postage by keeping successive postage rate increases well below the rate of inflation.

The major benefit of the Inspection Service does not lie in the marketplace but in its support of congressional oversight for the mail and for universal service. From consumer fraud, to child pornography, to physical security of property and the mail, the Inspection Service has been an effective agent for ensuring that the will of the Congress and the American people is reflected in the conduct of the nation's mail. Furthermore, its dedication and support have helped provide the

security and confidence needed to maintain a universal delivery system that fairly serves every citizen.

We are aware of other suggestions that would alter the role, location, or charter of the Inspection Service. Some theorists believe that federal law enforcement agencies of all pedigrees should be consolidated under a single agency. In many instances, and certainly with the Inspection Service, this would tend to dilute the unique perspective and expertise that present arrangements now provide. In effect, the marketplace of specialized law enforcement activities we now enjoy would become a centralized collective – a federal police agency.

It has also been suggested that the Inspection Service and its budget might move to another agency, without any change in its mission. At its heart, this suggestion attempts to transfer current postal obligations to the backs of taxpayers. In keeping with the same philosophy upon which the Postal Service has consistently declined billions of dollars in public service subsidies for which it is eligible, we reject this thinking as well.

Finally, some seem to believe that the Inspection Service provides a governmental aura for the Postal Service that private firms do not have. The truth is the Postal Service is a federal entity, and our mandate carries with it both advantages and disadvantages in the marketplace. We believe firmly, however, that no private-sector company would care to trade places with us because the shortcomings outweigh the benefits. We have acted on that belief before this Subcommittee by seeking changes in our legislative charter.

In summary, we believe the Inspection Service provides a distinct public service that is effectively conducted as currently organized. History and prevailing market results do not support arguments that the present arrangement provides the Postal Service with unfair competitive advantage. In fact, the opposite seems much more likely. Therefore, we believe it is in the best interest of customers, employees, and the American people to retain an effective Postal Inspection Service as an integral part of the United States Postal Service.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony. I would be happy to respond to your questions.

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